

LINGUISTIC CATCHES

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This is an excerpt from Gardner's new book Colossal Book of Word Play, to be published later this year. The book will be dedicated to Ross Eckler.

After playing knock knocks for a while, say to a friend

"I just thought of a great knock knock. Start me out."

Without thinking, your friend may say "Knock Knock." If so, you reply "Knock who?" It will catch the friend speechless!

Ask someone to make a fist with her left hand, then put her right hand palm down on top of the fist, and say "Wing" three times. Pick up her right hand, bring it to your ear, and say "Hello!"

Bet someone you can ask three questions and he will answer "No" to at least one of them. Question 1: Is snow green? Of course he will answer yes. Question 2: Is grass white? Again he will say yes. Now you say: "We don't have to continue. You've heard this before." Caught off guard he may reply "No I haven't." If so, you win the bet!

"If ice in water makes iced water, what does ice in ink make? If a friend replies "Iced ink" you respond "In that case you should bathe more often."

Ask a person to touch his head and say the abbreviation for mountain. If he touches his head and says MT, you reply, "You said it!"

Borrow a quarter, put it in your fist, and say "I claim that by sleight of hand I've changed this quarter to half a collar. Can I have the quarter if I'm wrong?" Without thinking just what your statement means, he may say "OK." If so, say "I'm wrong," open your fist and pocket the quarter.

I'll bet you didn't know that gullible is not a real word. It's not in any English dictionary!

If you sound convincing the victim may go home and check a dictionary. Of course that proves how gullible he is!

"I'll bet I can make you say blue." If he accepts the bet, ask "What color is the sky?" If he answers "red" (or some other color) say, "I win! I made you say red!" If he falls for the catch he will say, "But that wasn't the bet. You said you'd make me say blue." Of course you now have won.

"I can make this pencil," you say, "write any color you name." Suppose he names purple. Write the word "purple" on a sheet of paper.

Ask someone to write any word on a piece of paper, fold the paper, then stand on it. Say "By my psychic powers I'll tell you what's on the paper."
Concentrate a moment, then say "You are on the paper."

Ask a friend to think of any word and you will use your psychic powers to write the exact word on a sheet of paper. After he or she tells you the word, show that you have written down "the exact word."

Ask a male friend to say rapidly "Baby buggy bumpers." Whether he succeeds or fails, follow with this blue tongue twister: "I'm a smart fellow, I fellow smart."

"How do you pronounce the capitol of Kentucky – Leweyville or Lewisville?" Whatever the person replies, you say, "Wrong! The correct pronunciation is Frankfort."

Cover a glass of water with a napkin. Bet you can drink all the water without lifting the napkin. Duck under the table and make loud drinking sounds. Stand up and announce that the glass is now empty. When someone takes away the napkin to see, pick up the glass and drink the water.

Many years ago at a magician's convention I watched a young man demonstrate this "betcha." While he was under the table, someone lifted the napkin, drank the water, and replaced the cloth. When the young man emerged to announce that the glass was empty, the napkin was lifted and everyone professed amazement. The poor chap almost fell on the floor.

Can you say rapidly, "I owe the old lady?"
When she repeats the sentence, say, "I didn't know you could yodel."

What's the sum of 5Q and 5Q?
10Q
You're welcome.

What do you call that thing you're wearing on your left foot?
A shoe
Gazundheit!